

PLAYING BIG SONGS WITH A SMALL BAND

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WorshipGod22: Unchanging

I. The Problem

- A. You want to play a song like the recording, but you don't have the instrumentation.
 - 1. You have a piano and a cajon.
 - 2. Or a guitar and a violin.
- B. Or you don't have the skill.
 - 1. The last time your drummer played was in junior high school, 20 years ago.
 - 2. Your electric guitar player only plays chords.
 - 3. Your drummer knows 3 basic beats
- C. Or the desire!
 - 1. You don't think the way a song is done will serve your church.
 - 2. You don't prefer the way the song was done.
- D. Artists record songs for listening, not necessarily accessibility.
- E. Churches are different – historically, liturgically, leadership.

II. Possible Solutions

- A. Why not just purchase the stems from MultiTracks.com or loop community?
 - 1. Communicates the effectiveness of a song depends on instrumentation.
 - 2. Communicates we have to play a song “like the recording.”
 - 3. Communicates congregational worship is tied to a sound other than the congregation singing.
 - 4. Limits spontaneity
 - 5. Can become time consuming

- B. Develop your own arrangement with the resources you have.
 - 1. Communicates a dependence on God's Spirit to work through weak vessels.
 - 2. Communicates that worship is more than a "sound"
 - 3. Communicates the value of those who are actually gathered and serve

III. Things to Consider

- A. Melody & lyrics.
 - 1. Who carries the melody? The congregation. They are the driving force.
 - 2. Know if the song works with limited instrumentation. (Avoid songs with long instrumental breaks, uncomfortable range)
 - 3. Songs with excess melodic syncopation may not work as well with a smaller band.
- B. Intros, turns, outros
 - 1. When in doubt, leave lead lines out.
 - 2. Often better to make these shorter
 - 3. Often better to end with singing rather than an outro
- C. Bridges
 - 1. Don't use them if they're not working
 - 2. Only repeat as is helpful
- D. Dynamic progression
 - 1. Ask how the music can support the lyrics of the song.
 - 2. Use instrumental builds and drops outs in strategic places.

IV. Percussion

- A. Consider how a guitar or piano can add rhythm.
- B. Don't assume you have to fill in all the rhythm a drummer would play.
- C. Simplify complex beats, focus on the big picture rhythmically rather than the details.
- D. Play dynamically.

V. Harmonies

- A. Simplify harmonies
- B. Simplify rhythms
- C. Don't be afraid of repetition
- D. Write out a chord chart

VI. Q&A